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THE USE OF "GENS" AND "FAMILIA" BY SUETONIUS

Dr. Radin's interesting paper in *Class. Phil.*, IX, 235 ff., suggested an examination of these terms in Suetonius, who represents a time later than that which Dr. Radin considered, but might be expected to use the words with the accuracy of a scholar. The most important result of the investigation has been the conviction that the use of the words in question, like that of many others, is often affected by the context and by special factors, in particular by formulas of divers kinds.

So far as our indices may be trusted,¹ Suetonius uses *gens* seven times to designate nations, excluding a quotation from Vergil,² and always consistently of foreign nations. *Natio* occurs twice, in both cases without distinction from *gens* and for special reasons. In *Aug.* 21.1, "alias item nationes . . . ad obsequium redegit," Suetonius uses *nationes* merely for variety, since he has *gentes Inalpinas* a few lines before, while the next sentence begins with *nec ulli genti*. For the same reason "ad obsequium redegit" takes the place of *domuit* and *coercuit* in the preceding sentence. In *Gramm.* 8, "natione Syrus," and *Gramm.* 20, "natione Hispanus," we have a formula common in inscriptions, in which the place of *natione* is sometimes taken by *domo* and *genere*, but never by *gente*.

In the sense of a "super-family" or clan, Suetonius uses *gens* six times, always consistently, and once at least clearly distinguishing *gens* from *familia*: *Nero* 1.1, "ex gente Domitia duae familiae claruerunt, Calvinorum et Ahenobarborum."³ He specifically mentions a plebeian *gens* in *Tib.* 1.1, "patricia gens Claudia—fuit enim et alia plebeia . . . —orta est ex Regillis."⁴ He does not use *gens* of similar super-families outside of Rome.

The adjectives *gentilis* and *gentilicius*, which Dr. Radin rarely finds in Livy,⁵ occur respectively six times and twice in Suetonius,⁶ in every case but one having the meaning of "belonging to or relating to a *gens*" in the sense of a super-family. The sole exception to his consistency in the use of these adjectives is in *Nero* 41.1, "nihil autem aequè doluit, quam ut . . . pro Nerone Ahenobarbum appellatum; et nomen quidem gentile . . .

¹ I have been able to add one or two examples, but cannot guarantee absolute completeness. For the reader's convenience I have cited the examples, although nearly all of them are to be found in the index of the Baumgarten-Crusius edition.

² *Aug.* 40.5; the other cases are: *Jul.* 24.3; 84.5; *Aug.* 19.1; 21.1; 44.1; *Tib.* 9.2; *Vesp.* 4.1. In another quotation from Vergil (*Dom.* 9.1) *impia gens* is used generally of the human race.

³ *Jul.* 6.1, "a Venere Iulii, cuius gentis familia est nostra," should probably not be counted, since it occurs in a quotation from Caesar's eulogy of his aunt Julia; cf. *Galb.* 3.1, quoted below, p. 446.

⁴ The other examples of *gens* in this sense are: *Aug.* 2.1; *Tib.* 2.3; *Vesp.* 1.1.

⁵ He seems to have overlooked Livy 6.20.14.

⁶ *Gentilis*: *Tib.* 68.2; *Nero* 37.1; 41.1; 50; *Vit.* 1.3; and, as a subst., *Tib.* 1.2. *Gentilicius*: *Jul.* 1.2; *Claud.* 25.3.

resumpturum se professus est deposito adoptivo." Both Nero and Ahenobarbus are of course *cognomina* and not "gentile" names. Now it is obvious from *Nero* 1.1, cited above, that Suetonius recognized the difference between the *gens* Domitia and the *familiae* of the Calvini and Ahenobarbi. That he also distinguished "gentile" names from *cognomina* and put Nero as well as Ahenobarbus in the latter class is clear from *Tib.* 1.2, "inter cognomina autem et Neronis assumpsit"; cf. *Claud.* 25.3, "peregrinae condicionis homines vetuit usurpare Romana nomina dum taxat gentilitia." We must then seek some special reason for his exceptional use of *nomen gentile* in *Nero* 41.1. This appears to be the lack of a suitable expression to balance *adoptivo* (*nomine*). *Cognomen* would not have done this, and "nomen familiare" or "nomen familiae" hardly seems good Latin for "family name." He therefore used *gentile*, not in the sense of "gentile," but rather in that of "belonging (originally) to his *gens*," or "hereditary in his *gens*," as opposed to *adoptivo*. We may perhaps say that his rhetoric prevailed over his accuracy, for Mackail's remark (*Lat. Lit.*, p. 231) that Suetonius is "frankly without style" goes too far.¹ We have already noted his care in avoiding repetition of the same word in neighboring clauses, and examples of his rhetoric are not far to seek. One of the editors-in-chief of the Loeb Library appended to a suggestive comment on this feature, "I find to my amazement that Suetonius has a style,"² and the same discovery will be made by anyone who reads his pages with attention to that feature.

I have been able to discover no essential difference in Suetonius' use of *gentile* and *gentilicius*, or to find other examples of either "gentile nomen" or "gentilicium nomen"; the usual term is simply *nomen*.

Familia is used six times of a collection of *famuli* in general, and twice specifically of gladiatorial "families."³ With the meaning of a "family" in the modern sense the word occurs sixteen times, in two instances being clearly distinguished from *gens*. These instances are *Nero* 1.1, cited above, and *Galb.* 3.1, "imagines et eloquia universi generis exsequi longum est, familiae breviter attingam." Although in the latter example, as will appear, I do not regard *generis* as a synonym of *gens*, the reference nevertheless is to the *gens* Sulpicia as distinguished from the family of the Sulpicii Galbae, as is obvious from what follows: "qui primus Sulpiciorum cognomen Galbae tulit cur aut unde traxerit, ambigitur."

¹ Still less would a careful reader of Suetonius subscribe to Mackail's statement that "Suetonius measures more than half the distance from the fine familiar prose of the Golden Age to the base jargon of the authors of the Augustan History."

² I quote from memory, but accurately as regards the sense of the remark. To the favorable views of his art may now be added that of J. D. Duff, *Jour. of Phil.*, XXXIII (1914), 161 ff.

³ *Calig.* 55.3; *Claud.* 18.1; *Nero* 4; 44.1; *Vit.* 10.2; *Gramm.* 4; *Jul.* 10.2; *Aug.* 42.3.

In nine cases¹ no such distinction is made, but *familia* seems to be used of a family as a subdivision of a *gens*. It is obvious that Suetonius does not recognize the limitation of a family to four generations (*Class. Phil.*, IX, 238, with footnote). In *Nero* 2.1, after saying in the preceding chapter "pluris e familia cognosci referre arbitror," referring to the Ahenobarbi, he continues: "ut igitur paulo altius repetam, atavus eius," etc. Again he traces the duplex "Octavium familia" (*Aug.* 2.2) back to the *abavus*, if not to the *atavus*. Another case of the kind is that of the Sulpicii Galbae (*Galb.* 3). That *familia* in these cases means "family" and not "race" or "stock" seems obvious from Suetonius' consistent use of *stirpe* or *genere* in the latter sense.

We have left three examples in which *familia* might be thought to refer to a "super-family" or *gens*: *Tib.* 3.1, "insertus est et Liviorum familiae adoptato in eam materno avo. Quae familia, quamquam plebeia . . . admodum floruit"; *Claud.* 2.1, "fratre maiore [Claudii] in Iuliam familiam adoptato"; *Claud.* 39.2, "divulgavit neminem umquam per adoptionem familiae Claudiae insertum."

The suspicion that Suetonius used *familia* of a plebeian *gens*, which might be aroused by the first example, is dispelled by the two which follow, to say nothing of the fact that in *Tib.* 1.1 he uses (in effect) the expression *gens plebeia*. Since all the passages refer to adoption, his deviation from his regular usage is more naturally attributed to the influence of the formula "in familiam nomenque adoptare" (*Jul.* 83.2), a formula of which we find the variations "adscire in nomen" (*Claud.* 39.2) and "in bona et nomen adscire" (*Galb.* 17), but never "in gentem adoptare (adscire)." The second use of *familia* in the first example is influenced by the previous use of the word; obviously it would be awkward to say "insertum est et Liviorum familiae. . . . Quae gens."

He uses the adjective *familiaris* in the sense of "belonging to a (the) family" in *Lares familiares* (*Calig.* 5), *familiarem vitam* (*Aug.* 61.1) and in the frequent *res familiares*. Perhaps too in *familiare convivium* (*Tib.* 13.1) and *familiari cenae* (*Tit.* 9.2), although the latter at least seems doubtful.

Suetonius' use of *gens* and *familia* thus seems to be more regular and consistent than that of Livy. If my interpretation of the doubtful passage is correct, and if no significant example has escaped the makers of the indices, he uses *gens* consistently of a super-family, recognizing plebeian *gentes* and a division of *gentes* into *familiae* (but not into *stirpes*, as will appear). There is no certain example of a confusion of *gens* and *familia*, and no time limit is set on the meaning of the latter word.

In speaking of descent or race in more general terms, Suetonius uses several words, such as *stirps*, *genus*, *domus*, and *imagines*. He apparently

¹ *Jul.* 1.1; *Aug.* 2.2; 2.3; *Calig.* 36.1; *Nero* 32.2; *Galb.* 3.2; *Otho* 1.1; *Vit.* 1.1; *Vesp.* 1.3. In the last three instances *familia* is used of families outside of Rome.

does not use *nomen* in the sense of "family"; for in the formulas of adoption, of which examples have been given, the occurrence of *familiam* beside *nomen* shows that the latter word has a different connotation. *Jul.* 6.1 and *Vesp.* 4.5 do not appear to me to be examples of *nomen=familia*.

Domus is used six times¹ with the meaning "family." In *Vit.* 2.2, "P. Vitellius, domo Nuceria," it is a substitute for *natione* in the sense of "a native of" and is of course more properly used than *natione* would be in the case of an Italian town; cf. "natione Hispanus" and "natione Syrus," cited above.

He appears to use *genus*, as applied to Roman and Italian families, more frequently than Livy, having it at least a dozen times, including *Gramm.* 18, "L. Crassicius, genere Tarentinus," which is formulaic.² In this connection it may be noted that in the *De grammaticis* Suetonius has frequent occasion to refer to nationality and birthplace and that he avoids repetition with considerable skill, using *natione* twice, *genere*, *domo*, *natus*, and the geographic adjective. He uses *stirps* in the same sense as *genus* eight times.³

It seems very doubtful whether either *genus* or *stirps* is ever used as an actual synonym of *gens* or *familia*. The former might be suspected in *Tib.* 3.1, where after speaking at length of the history of the gens Claudia, Suetonius continues: "ex hac stirpe Tiberius Caesar genus trahit." But "ex hac stirpe" surely means "from such stock as this," rather than "from this *gens*" or "from such a *gens* as this." The same thing is true of *Vit.* 1.2 "horum(= Vitelliorum) residuam stirpem ex Sabinis transisse Romam," where, besides, *stirps* is used of the family before it moved to Rome. In fact, there seems to be no case in which either *gens* or *familia* could be substituted for *stirps* or *genus* without change of meaning. Indeed Suetonius in these cases, as in others, chose his words with great care, using *gens* only when it was strictly appropriate to the situation and regulating his use of *familia* by the same conditions. Thus in *Jul.* 59, "despectissimum quendam ex Corneliae genere . . . in castris secum habebat," it seems highly improbable that the *despectissimus* in question was a recognized member of the gens Cornelia. In *Vesp.* 12, "conantis quosdam originem Flavii generis ad conditores Reatinos comitemque Herculis . . . referre irrisit ultro," we might substitute *gentis* for *generis*, if it were not that the time referred to antedated the founding of Rome and the existence of *gentes*. In *Galb.* 3.1, "imagines et elogia universi generis exsequi longum est, familiae breviter attingam," one might say that there is no visible objection to such a substitution, but the fact that Suetonius has just said that Galba traced his ancestry on his father's side to Jupiter and on his mother's to Pasiphae makes *genus*

¹ *Aug.* 25.1; 58.2; 65.1; *Calig.* 13; *Galb.* 2; 4.4.

² *Jul.* 6.1; 59; 72; *Aug.* 5; 44.1; *Tib.* 3.1; *Galb.* 3.1; *Otho* 1.2; *Vesp.* 1.2; 4.5; 12; *Tit.* 4.2; 9.1; *Gr.* 18; of foreign nations, *Calig.* 22.1; *Nero* 28; 37.2.

³ *Jul.* 39.1; *Aug.* 4.1; 43.2; *Tib.* 3.1; *Calig.* 35.1; *Vit.* 1.2; 1.3; 2.2.

more suitable than *gens* in speaking of so very "ancient" a family, the origin of which went back to a time before the Roman *gentes* were thought of.

There is certainly no trace in Suetonius of the use of *stirps* as a subdivision of a *gens*. I should be inclined to add that there is no evidence for the use of *gens*, *stirps*, or any other word as the exact equivalent of *gens* or *familia*.

Another word which should be included in the last class is *imagines*; see *Calig.* 23.1, "suscensebatque si qui vel oratione vel carmine imaginibus eum [= Agrippam] Caesarum insereret," and cf. *Cic. Leg. Agr.* 2. 100.

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CATULLUS 95

Smyrna mei Cinnae nonam post denique messem
 quam coepta est nonamque edita post hiemem,
 millia cum interea quingenta Hortensius uno

.
 Smyrna cavas Satrachi penitus mittetur ad undas,
 Smyrnam cana diu saecula peruoluent.
 at Volusi annales Paduam morientur ad ipsam
 et laxas scombris saepe dabunt tunicas.
 parua mei mihi sint cordi monimenta ,
 at populus tumido gaudeat Antimacho.

The appearance of the name "Hortensius" (Munro calls it the "absurd Hortensius") in l. 3 of this poem has caused commentators much trouble. The evidence adduced to show that it is out of place may be divided into two classes, external and internal. It is principally with the internal evidence that I am concerned.

The chief argument from internal evidence is that the unity and balance of the poem are destroyed when the name of Hortensius is introduced. Ellis (*Commentary*, p. 470) says: "No one has stated this difficulty so clearly as Fröhlich: 'If both halves of the poem form a single whole the same two poets must be mentioned in either half: if Cinna and Hortensius in the first, then Cinna and Hortensius in the second; and conversely if Cinna and Volusius in the second, then Cinna and Volusius in the first. To bring together *three* writers, as our epigram does, would produce a poem comparable with a syllogism of four terms,' p. 276." Schwabe (*Quaestiones Catullianae*, p. 282) states the difficulty as follows: "Quis enim tantam inuenustatem Catullo imputare potest ut poetam, postea quam in carminis parte priore primum Zmyrnae Hortensii et Tanusii carmina mala opposuerit, in fine vim totius carminis comprehensurum Hortensii oblitum Tanusii solius mentionem fecisse credat?" It is, then, the opinion of many commentators that the third and fourth lines should have reference to Volusius and to him alone (Schwabe